

Description List/Text Sheet

Dress *versus* Woman (Plain Words for Plain People)

Vol. I: Ornamental Young Ladies (Social Discomfort)

Vol. II: Discipline and Duty (Fancies and Failings)

Tamar Stone © 2008-2010

Outside/Cover Corset:

Antique C/B A La Spirite Corset with lace edge. 6 metal front hooks with 4 metal garter buckle straps.

Interior original paper corset tag, "673 18 T".

Machine stitched, cotton embroidered text.

Interior lined with organza and ecru trim with machine embroidered text.

Height: 28" with garters

Width closed top: 7"

Width closed bottom: 13 1/2"

Width open top: 15"

Width open bottom: 25"

Vol I and II Booklets:

Digital ink jet prints on cotton sateen and sheer silk organza pages with cotton canvas fabric booklet covers.

Hand bound, machine and hand-stitched stitched pages.

Vol. 1: 17 pages with front/back cover

Vol. 2: 16 pages with front/back covers

Page Height: 9"

Page Width: 3 3/4"

Sources:

The American Lady, Charles Butler, Esq. 1845 (orig 1839)

The Art of Beauty. A book for women and girls, Edited by “Isobel” 1899

Beauty and Health Magazine, June 1903, Vol. 6

Beauty in Dress, Miss Oakey, 1881

Beauty is Power, 1871

Beauty of Form and Grace of Vesture, Frances Mary Steel and Eliz Livingston Steele Adams, 1892

Centuries of Female Days: Englishwomen’s private diaries, Harriet Blodgett, 1988

Confidential Chats with Girls, William Lee Howard, 1911

Daughters of the State: a social portrait of the first reform school for girls in North America, 1856-1905, Barbra Brenzel, 1883

Godey’s Ladies Book, May 1855

Golden Steps to Respectability, Usefulness and Happiness, John Mather Austin, 1850

Hapers Bazaar, The Ugly-girl papers; or Hints for the Toilet, 1874

Harriet Hubbard Ayer’s Book: a Complete and Authentic Treatise...of Health and Beauty
Harriet Hubbard Ayer, 1899

Health – beauty – sexuality – from girlhood to womanhood...
Bernarr Macfadden & Marion Malcolm. 1904

Hints to a fashionable lady; by a physician 1831

Lydia Maria Child, Selected Letters 1817-1880, – ed. Milton Meltzer and Patricia Holland, 1982

The well-dressed woman: a study in the practical application to dress of the laws of health, art and moral,
Helen Gilbert Ecob, 1892

Woman in American Society, Abba Goold Woolson, 1873,

Woman, in her Social and Domestic Character, Mrs. John Sandford, 1842

Womanhood; Hints and Helps for Young Women, William Makepeace Thayer, 1895

Your Daughters Corset – the Spirella Company pamphlet

The Young Ladies Book, Mrs. Henry Mackarness, 1876

Patent/Other:

Improvements in the Manufacturing Corsets, *Patent no. 161,019*, March 23, 1875, Harriet Emery

McDowell Garment Drafting Machine Company – *Pamphlet*, 1891

**Outside Cover
corset**

title *embroidered*

**Dress versus Woman
(Plain Words for Plain People)
Volumes I & II**

4 garters *embroidered*

Cultivate and easy, graceful carriage and deportment.

Inside lining pockets
embroidered

Keeps the symmetry of your figure, your shoulders erect, dress good fitting, back and spine strong.

Helps your figure, your dressmaker, your bodily health, your natural charm, your appearance in the eyes of everybody.

**Inside Cloth Book:
Vol. I Front Cover**
embroidered

back
(*inside book cover*)

Vol. I: Ornamental Young Ladies
Social Discomfort

To stand straight – Erect stiffness is better than crookedness.

To be admirable, the figure must be perfectly flat in the shoulders. No projecting shoulder-blades, no curves are allowed here, however pleasing they may be elsewhere. A stout figure can hardly be unrefined if is flat behind.

It may be referred to as the dictates of fashion, although in this, as in everything else, Simplicity in the Arrangement, and Grace in the Direction of the Lines, are the chief points to be considered. *Godey's Ladies Book*, May 1855

**Inside Book Vol. I
Sheer Page 1**

The McDowell System fits every form, follows every fashion and saves time, trouble and refitting.

[image of dress patterns]

**Inside Book Vol. I
Page 2 front**

From an early age “girl’s knowledge must be sought and gained with a twofold object in view: As a Future Woman, she receives that she may give. Then let every girl learn to think of herself as of a Future Teacher of the Beautiful and the Useful.

It is at the very Summit of Girlish Ambition that the guiding hand *should be clasped* which is to lead her into the secluded *but happy* Valley of Domestic Life. She must be peculiarly unfortunate if it is not offered; but she is worse than a fool if she does not then *encourage it and accept it*.

back

[image of p. 19 for Miss Weeks measurement page from *McDowell Measure Book*]

Inside Book Vol. I
Page 3 front

At no time in life is the proper selection of a corset more important than in the years when a girl is growing into womanhood. No greater mistake could be made than to assume that because the girl is young and slight of figure “*any corset will do for her.*”

So should you *choose with care* the corset your daughter wears, for unless her body is permitted to continue to develop along *natural lines* she may lose that to which every girl is entitled, a sound body.

back [image of p. 23 for Miss Bickford measurement page from *McDowell Measure Book*]

Inside Book Vol. I
Sheer Page 4

Improvements in the Methods of Manufacturing Corsets, *pat no. 161,019*, March 23, 1875 by Harriet Emery

My invention is designed not only to facilitate the manufacture of under-jackets and corsets by furnishing a definite system of measurements and means for obtaining the same...

Inside Book Vol. I
Page 5 front

A Perfect Body Development brings with it a realization of the best delights in life. With every part of your body tingling with virility, you taste sweets unknown to you before you gave it a chance to develop as Nature intended it to.

Those characteristic emotions of girlhood and young womanhood, which never reach perfection, except through the medium of complete and superb health, will then be yours.

back [image of p. 31 for Miss Clark measurement page from *McDowell Measure Book*]

Inside Book Vol. I
Page 6 front

There is nothing so fatal to a girl’s chances as untidiness.

To dress in Good Taste and with *every appearance of Neatness and Modesty*, is essential for the girl who seeks employment of respectful attentions.

{Perhaps you have not learned to recognize your own graces.}

back [image of p. 114 for Bell Wiggin measurement page from *McDowell Measure Book*]

Inside Book Vol. I
Sheer Page 7

The anatomical law upon which this system is based is that the waist and abdomen of a female child develop very early to a size nearly, if not quite, equal to that of mature years, while the breadth across the shoulders does not develop so early or rapidly, but on the contrary goes on steadily increasing until reaching its greatest breadth.

This law, as regards to the waist, is sometimes interfered with by tight lacing and other causes, so that occasionally adult women have waists smaller than when they were children, but the proper growth at the shoulders is not so checked.

Inside Book Vol. I
Page 8 front

Don't dress in a loud or gaudy manner unless you wish to attract the men of loud and loose principles.

{The personal appearance of a girl makes a great difference in the manner she will receive}

Don't be a Giggling Girl. The practice of giggling will certainly develop those tiny skin muscles in a way to make your face show some kind of distortion.

Parents are often much to be blamed for this indiscretion in their daughters. They should give them better advice!

back

[image of Florence Hill measurement page from *McDowell Measure Book*]

Inside Book Vol.. I
Sheer Page 9

By my new plan of a graduated series of shoulder measurements, in connection with a given and constant measurement for the waist, based upon the laws of growth of the person, I am enabled to provide an entire series of shoulder measurements adapted to any given waist size, varying from the narrowest shoulders to the broadest, and scaled or graduated to meet the changes in the shapes of growing children, and the different developments in the shoulders and busts of ladies of the same size around the waist, and this without the need of any special appliances in the corset itself for tightening up or letting out or filling up, so as to make it fit across the shoulders...

Inside Book Vol. I
Page 10 front

From the age of fourteen to eighteen is one of the most important periods in the life of a female. The different parts of the body, *as well as the mental faculties*, are then rapidly developing themselves, and the *nervous system shows a greater degree of sensitiveness and irritability that at almost any age*.

The feelings are then easily wrought upon — the passions readily excited — and the whole system, both of body and mind, bespeaks the great change which is taking place from childhood to maturity.

As such a period, common sense would teach us the propriety of carefully protecting the health from every exposure, *and above all things, avoiding immoderate mental excitement*.

back

[image of p. 186 for Miss Andrews measurement page from *McDowell Measure Book*]

Inside Book Vol. I
Page 11 front

In possession of a spotless character, she may reasonably hope for peace and happiness. But without such a character, she is *nothing!*

When the character of a young woman is gone – all is gone!

The reputation of a young woman is of the most delicate nature.

When a young woman is given to extravagant displays in dress, it is but publishing to the world, her own consciousness of a want of other attractions of a more substantial nature. It is but virtually saying,

"I seek to execute attention by my dress, because I have no other good quality by which I can secure attention."

back

[image of p. 310 for Miss Farker measurement page from *McDowell Measure Book*]

**Inside Book Vol. I
Sheer Page 12** ...with a given waist and by varying the size of the corset about the shoulders, the corsets with the same waist may be adapted to very many different people of widely different forms in other respects.

**Inside Book Vol. I
Page 13 front** A high full chest gives a girl *Individuality* and a *Sense of Self Confidence* which no other Beauty of Person can.
She impresses others with a Sense of Vitality and the *ability to succeed in whatever she undertakes*.

{This usually helps her get that which she wants.}

Whether it is the presidency of her class, a situation as a stenographer, or a place in some good man's heart, the *girl with the high, full chest* is pretty sure to secure the thing upon which she has set her heart and centered her magnetic personality.

back [image of p. 19 for Miss Weeks measurement page from *McDowell Measure Book*]

**Inside Book Vol. I
Sheer Page 14** Heretofore, in the old practice in the manufacture of children's corsets, there has been but one measurement, that around the waist, and in every case where they have had shoulder-support there has been but one size of shoulder to any given waist size.

**Inside Book Vol. I
Page 15 front** Remember to keep yourself properly poised whatever you may be doing during the day. Don't always lean to one side. Don't always bend in one direction.
When you do bend, let it be at the hips.
Never allow the shoulders to fall forward. Keep the head well back and up.
If these little points are remembered and put into practice you will have no cause to find fault with your carriage.
{A little defect, such as one shoulder being a trifle lower than the other, will appreciably mar what otherwise would be a good figure.}

back [image of p. 31 for Miss Clark measurement page from *McDowell Measure Book*]

**Inside Book Vol. I
Sheer Page 16** By my improvement of the two measurements, one fixed or determined, and the other having a gradual increment, a complete outfit, covering all the changes in the growing shape from childhood to womanhood can be obtained.

**Inside Book Vol. I
Page 17 front** At the very dawn of womanhood the young girl begins to live an artificial life utterly inconsistent with a normal development.
Her bloom is often as transient as that of a hothouse plant where the flower has been forced by cultivation to an excessive development, by stunting the growth of branches and limiting the spread of its roots.
The 'girl of the period' is made a woman before her time by associating too much with her elders and in diet, dress, habits and tastes....

back A girl scarcely enters her teens before custom requires a change in her mode of dress; her shoulder-straps and buttons are given up for a number of strings about her waist, and the additional weight of an increased length of skirt is added. She is unable to take the proper kind or necessary amount of exercise, even if she were not taught that it would be *unladylike*. Her waist is drawn into a shape little adapted to accommodate the organs placed there, and, as the abdominal and spinal muscles are seldom brought into play, they become atrophied.

Inside Book Vol. I
Page 18 front
(inside back cover)

“...to appear common place and sensible because to be on the right side or ordinary is the Perfection of Prudence in a young woman, and will save her from much heart burning and mortification of spirit.” Beatrice Webb, 1882

The moulding of the features is greatly affected by one’s thoughts and environment. In other words, *it is not so much the way your face is shaped, as how you “wear it.”*

back
(outside back cover)

Dress vs. Woman Vol. I
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Inside Cloth Book:
Vol. 2 Front Cover
embroidered

back
(inside book cover)

Vol. II: Discipline and Duty
Fancies and Failings

Within the last few years ladies’ dress has been making rapid advancement, not only in the complications used in its construction, but in the *Art of Fitting the Figure*.

To-day, unless a lady’s dress is properly shaped and well made, all the beauty that nature may have bestowed on the figure, or art given, the fabric covering it is considered lost; and the pleasure she might have given those surrounding her is thrown away.

Ladies are the natural dressmakers, but unfortunately their efforts have been clogged by incorrect methods.

Our system of actual measure is the simplest in use, and yet gives the contour of the body, or shape of the lady, more perfectly than any other.

Inside Book Vol. II
Sheer Page 1

A few of the Garments cut by the McDowell System.

[image of dress patterns]

Inside Book Vol. II [image of p. 41 for Mrs. Sewell measurement page from *McDowell Measure Book*]
Page 2 front

back

Every Woman Should Know How To Make a Dress

1. Because it is a more profitable a accomplishment than painting or music.
2. Because a woman can have two dresses for the cost of one
3. Because any member of the family can make dresses for the entire family
4. Because a practical knowledge of dressmaking will secure you a good position.
5. Because every woman should be prepared to support herself in case of reversed circumstances.

Keeps the symmetry of your figure, your shoulders erect, dress good fitting, back and spine strong.

Helps your figure, your dressmaker, your bodily health, your natural charm, your appearance in the eyes of everybody.

{it is both *her duty and her interest* to cultivate those qualities which will *render her most agreeable.*}

Inside Book Vol. II [image of p. 68 for Mrs. Trusell measurement page from *McDowell Measure Book*]
Page 3 front

back

A woman who does not know how to sew is as deficient in her education as a man who cannot write...she cannot be ignorant of the use of her needle, without incommoding herself and others, and without neglecting some important duties.

Besides this, there is, in this truly feminine employment, a moral power which is useful to the sex.

There is a soothing and sedative effect in needle-work; it composes the nerves, and furnishes a corrective for many of the little irritations of domestic life.

Inside Book Vol. II Dressmaking, to-day is an art, and requires taste,
Sheer Page 4 cultivation and judgment so follow it successfully.

By learning what pleases others *a correct taste may be cultivated*, and finally, one may develop into a competent judge and authority.

Inside Book Vol. II [image of p. 80 for Sara Cushing measurement page from *McDowell Measure Book*]
Page 5 front

back

Almost every woman is destined to have a leading or subordinate part in the management of the family. Preparation for the reading and intelligent performance of household duties, *the lowest as well as well as the highest*, is therefore, of the first importance. Now as perfect cleanliness is essential to health of body and of mind and to cheerfulness, all the arts of washing and scouring should be early learnt and practiced. So as to form and fix the habit of doing them well, thoroughly, rapidly and willingly.” 1883

State Industrial School for Girls in Lancaster, MA (1st state reform school in North America)

Inside Book Vol. II [image of p. 220 for Minnie Clark measurement page from *McDowell Measure Book*]
Page 6 front

back

Wit is, of all the qualities of the female mind, that which requires the severest castigation; yet the temperate exercise of this fascinating quality throws an additional luster round the character of an amiable woman; for to manage with discreet modesty a dangerous talent confers a higher praise than can be claimed by those from whom the absence of the talent removes the temptation to misemploy it.

To women, wit is a particularly perilous possession....

however, wit may be safely and pleasantly exercised;

for chastised wit is an elegant and well-bred, and not unfeminine quality 1848

Inside Book Vol. II It matters not how much taste is displayed in draping,
Sheer Page 7 or how carefully the garment is put together,
should the proper style or proportion be absent, it proves a failure.
Therefore the most important part in dressmaking rests
in the ability to properly cut the garment.

Inside Book Vol. II [image of p. 308 for Mothers measurement page from *McDowell Measure Book*]
Page 8 front

back

In life, woman are supposed to play the same part that flowers do in the natural world; they have always been told that their proper object is to embellish and to please....

Woman is chiefly viewed as a physical being; and upon her personal charms, her influence is made to depend.

A woman may possess all else that is essential to beauty, but if she lacks sweetness of disposition her features will not long remain admirable.

Inside Book Vol. II [image of p. 316 for Miss Main measurement page from *McDowell Measure Book*]
Page 9 front

back

Long tresses being also declared a glory to woman, she heaps upon her head such a mass of heavy, cumbersome braids, and skewers them on with such a weight of metal hair-pins, that, enslaved by this fashion, she can dream of heaven only as a place where it will be permitted for her to wear short hair.

This superficial assertion will not bear that rigid examination which may be extended, without any detriment, to the profound one from which it is copied....

Inside Book Vol. II [image of p. 336 for Mrs. Wilcox measurement page from *McDowell Measure Book*]
Page 10 front

back

Incongruity in dress is to be avoided by all who design to be considered smart.

A Properly Dressed Woman is as much a *Matter of Art* as a beautiful picture or a statue, and every item of her attire should bear some definite relation, or be complementary to all other items, *and* should help to bring about a harmonious and pleasing effect.

Inside Book Vol. II Sheer Page 11	The machine enables us to properly proportion each part according to the measure, and draft it without mistake, thereby securing a fit as good, in all respects, if not better, than if the party were present and the garment had been fitted on her figure.
Inside Book Vol. II Page 12 front	[image of p. 349 for Mrs. Clough measurement page from McDowell Measure Book]
back	<p>The <i>garment of the character</i> stated will reduce your hips and equalize all your proportions.</p> <p>The purpose of the corset was to support the woman's bones as they developed through life, but without harming or obstructing the corresponding development of muscles.</p> <p><i>...holding my shoulders back in such a stiff position is causing some pain in my neck and shoulders...it is for my best interest, that I grow straight and tall...</i></p> <p>The <i>true Artist of Corsets</i> could "<i>anticipate every requirement through life, and adapt her contrivances to the every varying want of the body.</i>" Roxy Caplin, Corset Maker, 1856</p>
Inside Book Vol. II Page 13 front	[image of p. 41 for Mrs. Sewell measurement page from <i>McDowell Measure Book</i>]
back	<p>The Condition and Character of Woman would be immeasurably improved by habits of thinking and acting on subjects of grave responsibility; but men would be still more benefited by the change...</p> <p><i>Men are not generally aware what high pleasures and important aid they lose by those customs of society which render wives, daughters, and sisters, either mere domestic drudges or dressed-up dolls of fashion.</i> Lydia Maria Child, May 30th 1870, To the Advocates of Woman's Suffrage in Iowa</p> <p>{A woman should hesitate long before adding to her costume an accessory likely to rival herself.}</p>
Inside Book Vol. II Page 14 front	[image of p. 68 for Mrs. Trusell measurement page from <i>McDowell Measure Book</i>]
back	<p>Essential qualities of a beautiful dress for correct proportions....</p> <p>...if necessary, to simulate corresponding proportions by every harmless device of art... provide such clothing as well enhance the beauty of the changed contours.</p> <p>That a majority of women do not wish for any important change in their social and civil condition merely proves that they are unreflecting slaves of custom...<i>they are totally unconscious of what they have lost by the systematic stifling of their souls.</i></p>

Inside Book Vol. II
Sheer Page 15 The beauty of the figure and the style and comfort all depend on the cutter, and the latter must rely on a method as changeable as fashion and as variable as the figure itself, since a perfect result is otherwise impossible.

Inside Book Vol. II
Page 16 front [image of p. 308 for Mothers measurement page from *McDowell Measure Book*]

back

The dress should always be harmonious with one's surroundings.
Let the dress be so simply an expression of the woman,
that she is unconscious of it when she has put it on.
Let the thinking become before the dressing.
Thus alone she can be harmonious and graceful –
attributes that form the Highest Beauty. Miss Oakey, 1881

Inside Book Vol. II
Page 17/back cover
inside front Those gifted with Beauty of Features have a power,
which if conjoined to high mental attainments,
will enable them to reach any goal they may desire.

back cover
embroidered

Dress vs. Woman Vol. II
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